



From Guardian to Friend: The Many Faces and Roles of NATO in Afghanistan

Afghan children gather around the camera during a patrol with a French liaison team. More than 600 children of the northeast Kabul suburbs can now attend a new school, thanks to construction assistance from International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and French funding. The school consists of eight classrooms, three administrative offices, sanitary facilities, and a well. *November 2008. Photo by Cpl. John Rafoss.*

A platoon of Dutch soldiers settles in for the night



This platoon is on a three-day mission focused on meeting Afghans in their villages. A major goal of ISAF is to build friendships through patrols like these or through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), civil-military units that help develop longer-term partnerships with the local Afghan community. August 2008. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class John Collins.

Senior RAF Aircraftman Jo Ralph makes friends with a local child



The Royal Air Force routinely patrols the area surrounding Kandahar Air Field to prevent rocket attacks against the base by insurgents. United Kingdom ISAF troops, which number around 8,300, are active in some of the most dangerous regions of Afghanistan. July 2008. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class John Collins.

Workers sort pomegranates for export in Kandahar Province



Pomegranates, known as the “wonder fruit” and mentioned in the Koran for their multiple health benefits, may one day supplant the opium poppy as the crop of choice for Afghanistan’s farmers. Currently, 263 families receive help from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in selecting, packaging, and shipping best quality pomegranates to overseas buyers as part of the “Kandahar Orchards Project.” Throughout the Middle East, wholesalers stand by Kandahar pomegranates as among the best in the world. *December 2008. USAID Photo.*

Afghan war widows find a way to make a living in Kabul: baking bread



For women in Afghanistan, the Taliban years were a time of fear, deprivation, and second-class status. Most of them were banned from working outside the home. Their daughters were not allowed to attend school. This was particularly hard on widows. There are an estimated 50,000 war widows in Kabul alone who need to work to support their children. Under the Taliban, the widows' bakeries were usually permitted to operate. Still, there were arbitrary arrests and beatings of women working at them, and bakeries were shut down at whim. USAID is working with the World Food Program to provide women with the means to earn a living and to help feed a quarter of Kabul's population.

June 2003. Photo by Alejandro Chicheri.

Marines prepare to go on patrol with the Afghan National Border Patrol in Helmand Province



Helmand Province is a nexus of the Taliban insurgency and one of the most dangerous regions in Afghanistan. It is also the world's largest opium-producer. In 2008, however, total opium cultivation in Afghanistan dropped by 19 percent over 2007, and today, 18 out of 34 provinces are poppy-free. 2008. Photo by Cpl. Alex Guerra .

An Afghan police instructor shows a police trainee how to properly turn and arm himself



The Jalalabad Regional Training Center (RTC) is one of seven RTCs located throughout Afghanistan. The eight-week training gives recruits the basics of police operations, including proper arrest procedures, human rights, Afghan laws, and corruption issues. Established more than four years ago, the RTCs have trained more than 52,000 police. June 2008. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Reebea Critser.

Laughter at an Afghan girls' school



In 2001, less than one million Afghan children attended school, and no girls were allowed an education by the Taliban. Today, thanks to improved security and new school construction by international and Afghan National Security Forces, there are almost six million children in school, and more than one third are girls. *March 2008. ISAF Photo.*

The Afghan National Army offloads a donated MI-17 attack helicopter



Helicopters play a crucial role in ISAF's operations, especially in the south, where the Taliban insurgency is most active. Increasing the number of available helicopters is an urgent priority, both for ISAF and Afghan National Army Air Corps commanders. Battlefield helicopters move troops and supplies as a way to avoid having to transport vulnerable troops on dangerous roads. Here, the ANA offloads an MI-17 chopper donated by the Czech Republic at Kabul International Airport. The Czech Republic is an active contributor to ISAF, with 415 troops involved in four locations, including a PRT. *December 2008. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Brenda Nipper.*

Crayons and a friend make the time pass quickly for a young burn patient



The Indira Gandhi Hospital in downtown Kabul operates on just \$400 a month, and the children's burn ward is a regular recipient of supplies – such as stuffed animals and crayons – brought in by ISAF volunteers. U.S. Navy Cmdr. Gregory Harris is one of them, as he crayons with a young boy in the ward. Today, more than 80 percent of the population has access to some form of health care, up from eight percent in 2002. November 2008. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Monica Nelson.

Spanish army paratroopers exit a Chinook helicopter at Bala Murghab Forward Operating Base



ISAF missions assist the Afghan government in extending and exercising its authority and influence across the country, creating the conditions for stabilization and reconstruction. Spain, with 780 troops engaged, is one of the 42 nations contributing towards ISAF operations. *September 2008. Photo by Tech Sgt. Laura Smith*

An exciting new public library for Farah City



PRT senior engineer, U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Rich Sessoms, inspects construction on Farah City's unique public library, a two-story building that will have male and female reading rooms as well as 20-25 book stacks. The architecture of the building makes it the first of its kind in Farah City. Funds for the library came from PRT-Farah and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the books were donated by a private French citizen. January 2009. Courtesy Photo.

An injured arm, a doctor, and a bandage...



Under the gaze of 7-year-old Niman, whose arm was injured during a fall, Bulgarian Armed Forces physician, Dr. Vladimir Getzov, prepares a bandage. The child received triage care by an Italian armed forces team at the main gate, and was then transported to the Role 2 Medical Clinic at Camp Arena for further treatment. The ISAF medical facility at the camp treats civilians in an effort to provide care to local patients in need. More than 80 percent of the population now has access to some form of health care, up from eight percent in 2002. And child mortality has dropped more than 26 percent since 2003, when ISAF forces first entered Afghanistan. *December 2008. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Laura Smith.*

Aliachmad, 70 years old, works behind his patu loom in the hills of the Shamali Plains



“You see my own equipment, except the new loom, is over 30 years old. If I weave a patu for the market, I will do it all in one day. But if I make a patu for the village, for a wedding or celebration, then two days. It is a beautiful gift for the wedding. They know what I do here, because I always weave the patu. Ask if I am good?” USAID provided Aliachmad with a refurbished loom and materials – to restart his career as the village patu (men’s scarf) expert. The agency also provided equipment and material, such as wool, for other weavers in the area. *December 2003. Photo by Matt Herrick.*

A Canadian soldier greets a Kandahar child at a local school



Canadian Cpl. C. M. Smithers, a member of the Kandahar PRT, makes a new friend. This PRT has worked on many construction projects, such as schools and government facilities, to assist the Afghan government improve the lives of residents. At the end of Taliban rule, more than 80 percent of all schools were destroyed; now, more than 670 schools have been rebuilt or refurbished. *August 2008.*
Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Duran.

Every day, more than 400 bicyclists ride over the Pul-e-Alam road south of Kabul



Road reconstruction is a high priority for the Afghan government. The new 35 kilometer Pul-e-Alam road connects to the Kabul-Kandahar Ring Road and Highway, and cuts travel time from two hours to 40 minutes. Over 200,000 people in the Pul-e-Alam vicinity benefit from the new road, which was once a rough, dangerous trail. Major road reconstruction has provided increased access to education and health care; it has improved travel and security; and it has reactivated the agriculture sector. Roads also provide an economic avenue for national and international trucking across the country. This is part of the USAID secondary roads reconstruction program, providing a vital infrastructure for Afghan communities. *June 2006. Photo by Idrees Ilham/USAID.*

“We asked for help and received some...we thank people for their kindness.” - Abdul Razak



A local refugee camp on the outskirts of Kabul received more than 550 kilograms of rice and other supplies from ISAF volunteers. U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Yevsey Goldberg, a doctor deployed to ISAF Headquarters, personally donated nearly half the \$500 cost of the rice from a local merchant. 53 percent of the Afghan population lives below the poverty line and is at “high risk” of “food insecurity”, according to the United Nations. December 2008. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Aramis Ramirez.

An American naval officer explains to journalists the importance of building a road



U.S. Navy Cmdr. George Perez, base commander of Forward Operating Base, Kalagush, explains to six visiting European journalists the importance of building a road in Nuristan Province. September 2008. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Reebea Critser.

On foot patrol with the Afghan National Army, a French officer finds a rare moment of rest



Maj. Poutout, a French Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) doctor, belongs to a unique ISAF program: small teams – usually made up of 12-19 soldiers – embed for six months with Afghan National Army (ANA) forces to provide support, liaison, and training – such as basic infantry instruction. They may also accompany ANA forces on combat missions. Maj. Poutout's role is to teach medical technical skills to ANA medics. By rigorous and ongoing mentoring, OMLTs encourage ANA troops to eventually become self-sufficient units. *November 2008. Photo by Cpl. John Rafoss.*

U.S. Navy Seabees help ISAF build protection in Helmand Province



U.S. naval forces use large, armored bulldozers to push soil into protective barriers near a forward operating base in Helmand Province. The construction battalion is deployed to provide support to ISAF. January 2009. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael B. Lavender.

A bridge of hope and trust



ISAF and local officials inaugurate a new bridge in Deh Sabz. The bridge, worth 10,000 Euros, was financed partly by the brick salesmen of Deh Sabz and ISAF's Regional Command Capital's German battle group in Kabul. Construction on the bridge began in November 2007, following the request of the local Malek of Hadji Saheb. March 2008. ISAF Photo.

The welcome board at the entry to the Kabul Military Training Center



At the Training Center, thousands of soldiers are trained every year before joining the Afghan National Army (ANA). A major goal of NATO's mission in Afghanistan is to improve the country's security forces so that they can be responsible for national security and stability. Today, more than 90 percent of ISAF operations are conducted in conjunction with the ANA. *November 2008. ISAF Photo.*

Journalists visit the first agricultural fair in Kunduz Province



Visiting European journalists film a woman displaying her products at the first agricultural fair in Kunduz Province. Since 2003, more than 70,000 loans have been extended to women-owned businesses. June 2008. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Reeba Critser.

British royal marine commandos patrol a road in Helmand Province



UK troops take part in Operation Sond Chara, the clearance of the Nad-e Ali District of Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan by Afghan National Security Forces and ISAF troops. The operation's goal is to bring stabilization to the district, to increase security, and to set safe conditions for voter registration later in 2009. *December 2009.*
Photo by Cpl. John Rafoss.

A young Afghan burn victim receives a smile and a surprise from an American officer



United States Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Monica Nelson gives a stuffed bunny to a burned Afghan girl in the Indira Ghandi Children's Hospital Burn Ward, while international service members, also assigned to ISAF Headquarters, pass out stuffed animals and crayons. The children's burn ward is a regular recipient of donations brought in by ISAF volunteers. The hospital is the only functioning pediatric facility in Afghanistan. Altogether, international efforts have helped produce a 26 percent drop in child mortality since 2002. *November 2008. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Monica Nelson.*

In Herat Province, farmer Mola Shah Gool works in his greenhouse during the winter



Afghan farmer Gool earned \$660 from his greenhouse during a time period when he normally had no income, thanks to a program sponsored by USAID and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Altogether, 81 greenhouses were constructed in Herat Province, allowing small and medium-scale farmers the four distinct advantages of greenhouse cultivation: off-season income, local crop production, low start-up costs, and sustainability. October 2006. Catholic Relief Services Photo.

U.S. Navy Seabees depart a giant Air Force C-17, on their way to support ISAF troops working on construction projects



One of the most important missions for U.S. and ISAF forces is to assist the Afghan people in repairing the country's infrastructure, which was almost totally destroyed after 25 years of war and violence. These include vitally important public structures such as roads, bridges, wells, schools, hospitals and police stations. Most projects are coordinated with local authorities as part of a civil-military partnership. *January 2009. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael B. Lavender.*

Registering for elections, 2009



Afghan citizens register to vote at the Voters' Registration Center for Men in Farah City. The next set of provincial and presidential elections is scheduled for August 20, 2009. Security for these elections will be the responsibility of Afghan National Security Forces, supported by ISAF when necessary. One important blueprint used for political transformation is the "Afghanistan National Development Strategy", which serves as a guide for reform and good governance. *January 2009. ISAF Photo.*

A vital bridge across a western Afghan river



Village members surge onto the new bridge across the Murghab River, Western Afghanistan. This bridge, built primarily by Afghan National Security Forces - with the assistance of ISAF - replaced the unstable old one, which had visible cracks. Without a reliable bridge, schools and hospitals on one side of the river could not serve people on the other side, and would inhibit freedom of movement along the main road in the western part of the country. December 2008. ISAF Photo.

Graduation Day in Kandahar



Former recruits become fully-fledged police at a ceremony in Kandahar after completing eight weeks of specialized training. One of ISAF's key tasks is to help transform the Afghan National Police (ANP) into an efficient, accountable, civilian force of up to 82,000 that can maintain law and order. In the south and east, two regions in the heart of Taliban country, the U.S. sponsors this "Focused District Development" program that offers pay parity and tough training. The hope is that these police graduates will play key security roles in high-risk districts. *February 2009. ISAF Photo.*

An Afghan donkey gets the full veterinary treatment



ISAF forces assist with veterinary treatment in western Afghanistan. Sgt. 1st Class James Barnett , a medical corpsman embedded with the ANA, treats a donkey - just one of the more than 1,000 animals treated in one day. Altogether, 900 sheep and goats, 60 donkeys, and 50 dogs received care. With the training, supplies, and equipment provided, the villagers learned how to minister to their herds and pets, totaling 4,000 animals. *December 2007. Photo by Chief Petty Charles Wisard.*

The U.S. helps provide much-needed winter supplies



USAID winterization kits are distributed in Manogai District, Konar Province. All of the kits, which contain clothes and blankets for the frigid, snowy weather, are accounted for by Afghan local authorities to ensure items are not diverted, and everyone receives a fair share. *February 2009. ISAF Photo.*

Fareba Miriam, 26, becomes the first woman to enroll in a para-vet training program. She is the eldest daughter in a family of 12



After Fareba Miriam graduates from para-veterinarian training, she will have the necessary skills to manage her own Veterinary Field Unit. Fareba will attend a six-month course sponsored by USAID's Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Program (RAMP) at one of the training centers located in Parwan, Hirat, and Balkh provinces. Altogether, USAID has established 386 Veterinary Field Units in 31 provinces throughout Afghanistan as a response to the need to improve livestock health and reduce mortality rates. Although her family does not raise livestock, many members of Fariba's community are dependent on healthy herds and flocks for their livelihood. *May 2006. Photo by Jeremy Foster RAMP/Afghanistan.*

Securing Kabul



Afghanistan's National Security Forces have assumed responsibility for the security of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, although ISAF troops still will patrol in outlying neighborhoods. The city, which continues to grow rapidly, has a population of approximately three million people. *January 2008. ISAF Photo*